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The following letter dated April 20, 1951 was received by the Director of the Baghdad School from Professor Braidwood. Members and friends of the Schools know that the Baghdad School availed itself of Prof. Braidwood's presence in Iraq for excavation at Qalat Jarmo (Kirkuk Liwa) on behalf of the Oriental Institute to charge him with what was called a "cave project". The aim was to close as far as possible the gap between the earliest village civilization of the Near East, already narrowed down by the work at Jarmo. Ably assisted by Dr. Bruce Howe this is successfully being achieved. In the process an open air site was substituted for the cave. The work going on is best described in Prof. Braidwood's own words.

"My last letter was written before the formal permission to excavate at Karim Shahir had come from the Directorate General of Antiquities, but I know you will have had word in the matter from President Kraeling. We actually started digging on March 14, and it looks as if the funds will last for several weeks more. We have missed a few days due to rain and heavy wind, but have otherwise had perfect digging weather. At the outset, we started in with about a dozen trained workmen from Jarmo, and another dozen from the nearby village (we had actually put these latter through a one week's basic training course at Jarmo as well). Since then, we have added more workmen to Karim Shahir as we've cut back at Jarmo, so the present labor list has 46 names on it. My old Abdullah, whom you will remember from Matarrah, is foreman; Bruce Howe is actively running the show, along with Fredrik Barth, and the rest of us get out for special jobs.

The site is at the top of a steep bluff, 170 feet above a wadi in which there is now a stream of water about a foot deep. There are actually some springs in the wadi which are perennial. The other flanks of the site are formed by lesser wadis, so that the mound itself is a hill-top affair and commands a fine view. The relatively flat area of the top of the hill is approximately 100m. x 60m. in area, and most of this has surface indications of occupation.

We began by cutting a step 20m. long and approximately 2.0m. deep and 3.0m. wide along the edge of the bluff, where hearth traces were apparent before excavation. This indicated a total depth of debris at this point of ca. 1.70m, and the most concentrated occupation horizon at ca. 40 - 50 cm. depth. The area adjacent to the step was next exposed in a series of contiguous 5 m. squares; so far, over 150 sq. m. have been uncovered beyond the step in this operation, called Operation I. Three further trenches, 7.5 m. x 3.0 m. in size, have been put down along a line from Operation I over the crest of the hill; at 7.5/ intervals, so as to test the general scatter of occupation on the site. These have encountered relatively little: it appears that living activities were concentrated near the present bluff face.

The site may be definitely said to have architectural manifestations, but up to now, these are not very comprehensible to us. The well developed occupation level at 40 - 50 cm. in Operation I has a heavy concentration of cracked rocks

and field stones, not over 20 cm. in diameter, but save for an area of slightly smaller stones set as a floor or pavement, we cannot yet see any meaningful plan. On the other hand, Professor Wright felt certain that these stones had no geological reason for being where they were, and charcoal, flint tools, and some other artifacts occur with them.

Hearth-like clusters of stones appeared at greater depths in the step operation, in which we also encountered a fair sized pit with a thin layer of ochre near its bottom. The site yields no pottery and virtually no obsidian. The flint tools consist of normal sized flakes and blades with various types of retouch, many blade-cores for both normal and microlithic blades, and delicate microlithic bladelets and borers. So far, only one sickle-blade has been noted. Chipped-and-polished celts appear, and there have also been fragments of boulder-mortars and pestles or rubbing stones. There is a small group of proper ground-stone artifacts, mainly bracelet fragments, beads, and simple pendants. Rectangular doubly pierced shell plaques appear, also bone beads as well as some bone points. There have been two small figurines of unbaked clay, both of a apparently the same type - it may be that the subject was a highly conventional mother-goddess, actually these minute figures look like very highly conventionalized rabbits sitting upright.

So far, we have not observed any floral remains, in the charcoal, which were comprehensible to us. There is a striking scarcity of animal bones, as compared with Jarmo, for example: Barth's preliminary survey of the fauna indicates sheep and/or goat, pig, a large bos, deer, gazelle, and smaller mammals. Bitumen and ochre have also been noted.

The Karim Shahr assemblage is vastly simpler than that of the village site of Jarmo, which lies only about a mile and a half away. On the other hand, our comprehension of the assemblage at Zarzi (which site we have visited and collected surface specimens from, as well as having available Professor Garrod's report and the collections in the Iraq Museum) would indicate that Karim Shahr is well advanced over the stage of the "extended Gravettian" materials of Zarzi. In fact, Karim Shahr probably lies much closer in time and technological complexity to Jarmo than it does to Zarzi, although it would not surprise us (in terms of our present understanding of the situation) if a stage might sometime be found which will need to be intercalated between Karim Shahr and Jarmo. Nevertheless, we also believe that interpretations drawn on the present three assemblages - Zarzi, Karim Shahr, and Jarmo - will indicate in general outline the course of cultural development from the late cave-dwelling stage into the time of well established village economies, for this part of the Near East. In this sense, we are already extremely gratified by the results at Karim Shahr, and there will doubtless be more to add when the work there is finished and the results synthesized.

Before, and during the earliest weeks' work at Karim Shahr, Professor Wright carried on his geological survey of the whole area, on which he will himself report to the sponsoring institutions. We can only say in brief how much Wright's work stimulated our imaginations and comprehension of the original ecological situations which must have confronted the people of Karim Shahr and Jarmo; Wright's work also makes an excellent foundation for Barth's direct interests in ecology. One direct result of Wright's studies was that our interest was focused on the site of Barda Balka, the surface site with Acheulean hand-axes which had been discovered by the Directorate General of Antiquities, and which was noted in SUMER in 1949 by Dr. Naji al-Asil, the Director General. As a result of Wright's and Howe's conviction that, with a short exploratory excavation of the site, the geological source of the artifacts could be established, we proposed to Dr. al-Asil that we undertake such a geological-archaeo-

logical exploration for the Directorate General. Dr. al-Asil quickly arranged the matter and offered to meet half of the expenses for the work, and we assumed the other half, on the part of the Baghdad School through the Walter B. Howe grant.

Barda Balka was worked with a maximum of twelve men, for a total (so far) of four and one half days. The result has been the identification of the particular gravel bed from which the artifacts are derived, the establishment of the general geological stratification at the area of the site, and the stone tools and animal bones in situ. The full report on Barda Balka will be made by Wright and Howe in Sumer. In brief, the artifacts consist of a group of flint flakes in fresh condition. Types and retouch show in part "Mousterian", a group of larger core-bifaces in limestone "Acheulean" characteristics; a group of pebble-tools is associated with them. The fauna has been tentatively worked over by Barth; horse predominates, but elephant, deer, and sheep and/or goat teeth were also present. On grounds of comparative archaeological typology, Barda Balka probably refers to the time of the Riss-Würm or last interglacial stage. It is certainly the earliest in situ material in Iraq, and one of the earliest in the Near East, and will be of considerable comparative value for general Old World prehistory.

In our general survey, which ran coincidentally with Wright's, we have also found sites representing the Hassuna, late Halaf-Ubaid, Ubaid; Uruk or Gawran, late Early Dynastic-Akkadian (?), Assyrian, and later periods. With Wright, we collected a late wheel-made (yet to be positively identified) pottery imbedded within a twenty-five foot aggradation terrace in one of the wadis which drain the Chemchemal valley - an indication of the speed with which the erosion-aggradation cycle (and possibly the climatic cycle) has moved in relatively recent times.

Our money for field work, as I said above, will probably last for about three weeks more, and we shall doubtless be out of camp by June 1st. I can't refrain from saying how gratifying and exciting the whole thing has been. Granted this is primarily from the point of view of pre-and protohistory, but I only hope our more historically oriented colleagues will be able to catch part of our enthusiasm as well. I'm not at all worried about your own personal feelings in the matter; since we had you here in 1948, I know that screen of philological interest you profess is just a sham which hides a potential prehistorian. Also, I can't close without saying that I couldn't have, in my fondest dreams, gotten together a better staff, from every point of view -- their personalities and interests and competences all complement each other perfectly. This, as you well know, makes for happy and effective diggings."

The Director of the Baghdad School cannot let pass this occasion without expressing publicly -- or at least semi-publicly -- the School's sincere appreciation to Mr. Walter B. Howe of Washington, D.C., whose most generous gift made it possible for the School to participate in the Directorate General's exploration of Barda Balka described in Dr. Braidwood's letter.